

Tasmanian
Field Naturalists'
Club



EASTER CAMP
1926

at

SAFETY COVE, PORT ARTHUR



GENERAL ACCOUNT

By CLIVE E. LORD, F.L.S.

BOTANICAL NOTES

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GENERAL ACCOUNT

By CLIVE E. LORD, F.L.S.

Twenty-two years ago the Tasmanian Field Naturalists' Club commenced its Easter camps. The success which has attended these outings ever a series of years is due to several reasons, among which may be mentioned the dual purpose which these camps serve. Not only do they provide means for lovers of nature to visit distant localities and to pursue their studies in these regions, but they serve to bring together members of the club in a social way, and thus assist in forming that spirit of good fellowship upon which so much of the success of any organisation depends. The annual outings are well established now, and if the club's efforts to awaken an enlivened interest in Tasmanian natural history are successful, these excursions will provide an opportunity to an even greater number of natural history workers than they do at present.

The camp site this year was Safety Cove, Port Arthur, which locality had been visited by the club on several previous occasions, namely, in 1913, 1918, and 1920. The natural beauties of the district, combined with its historical associations, add to the interest to a considerable degree. In addition the camp site at Safety Cove is an ideal one, and the thanks of the club are due to Messrs. Briggs Bros. for permitting the members to camp on their property.

The party this year numbered 36 all told, six of whom formed the advance party. These latter members, together with the camp impedimenta, left Hobart shortly after 9 o'clock on Wednesday, March 31, in the Reemere, and after the trip around Cape Raoul—which had a disturbing effect upon at least one member of the party—the boat was anchored close to the beach off Safety Cove at a quarter to two.

An immediate start was made getting the camp gear ashore, and it was nearly two hours later before the Reemere left the small party, and an immense accumulation of luggage on the

site which was to be our home for the next few days.

A start was made to erect certain of the tents that evening, and a fair amount of work had been done before darkness fell, and the party retired to rest in preparation for a long day's work on the morrow.

Thursday morning found the members of the advance party early astir, and the work of preparing the camp proceeded throughout the day. By midday most of the tents had been set up, but it was late in the afternoon before the camp was complete, twenty tents having been erected, and the various packages of luggage, etc., allotted to their correct designations, and the galley and dining tent having been set out.

After the evening meal the advance party was enabled to rest from its labours and await the arrival of the rest of the party. Shortly before 10 o'clock the honk of a motor horn on the Port Arthur-road announced the arrival of the main party, and these were soon received in camp, and did full justice to the coffee and hot cross buns which were awaiting their arrival. It was some time later before the various tent parties had settled down in their new quarters.

The following day gave every promise of fine weather, and several excursions were arranged to visit such places as the Remarkable Cave and the Blowhole, which were within fairly short distance of the camp. Other members spent most of the day in camp, as two other parties arrived from town in their own cars; but by the afternoon the camp was fully complete, and all the members had an opportunity of meeting together and discussing the camp site and other items of interest at the time. As regards the exact site of the camp, the tents were pitched at the southern end of Safety Cove, on the small strip of flat land between the sand hummock which fringes the beach and the hill which rises at the



ON THE ROAD TO PORT ARTHUR.

back and so forms a shelter from any westerly winds which sweep across the area on occasions, but this year were conspicuous by their absence.

Along this sandy strip eucalypts and other shrubs assisted in the formation of an ideal camp site, and as there was a plentiful supply of fresh water at both ends of the camp conditions were almost ideal. At the southern end of the bay the encircling hill, curving eastward formed a protecting arm from the south against the long ocean rollers which swept in at the foot of the great sand dunes at Halt Moon Bay. Beyond the bay the rounded outlines of Brown Mountain formed a distinctive landmark, whilst further to the west the coastline sheltered such interesting places as the Blowhole, the Remarkable Cave, and other natural wonders. Some miles away the picturesque battlements of Cape Raoul project far into the sea, and the nomenclature of the headland recalls the pilot of D'Entrecasteaux's exploring expedition of 1792.

On Saturday most of the campers paid a visit to Carnarvon, the township of Port Arthur. Much has been written concerning the days of the old convict regime, and much misleading information still continues to be distributed concerning those early days of last century when the general tenor of public opinion was so far removed from what it is to-day.

Of the thousands of visitors who visit this historic spot annually, how many really take time to consider the history of the place in its true perspective?

To begin with, Port Arthur has been lifted far above its correct position in the initial scheme of colonisation of Australasia owing to the publication of such books as "The Term of His Natural Life." The average visitor looks upon Port Arthur as the Alpha and Omega of the era when the British Government utilised its unwanted subjects as the means of opening up new regions for settlement. There were large stations in many other parts of Australia, and even beyond our shores, but these have long been crowded out by the rapid expansion of population. These conditions do not apply in the same degree to Port Arthur, and the natural consequence is that it becomes more and more the Mecca of those who desire to study the methods of the past, some owing to a true historical desire, but many from a merely superficial curiosity.

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The true history of Port Arthur yet remains to be written, and much information yet remains to be gathered before this can be accomplished. An illuminating document has recently been drawn attention to by Mr. R. W. Giblin, of London. It is no less than the private journal of Captain Charles O'Hara Booth, who was Commandant on the Peninsula during the period at which the settlement was expanding under the influence of his exceptional powers of organisation.

Mr. Giblin, with the permission of Major Richmond, the owner of the diary, made numerous extracts from the same, and forwarded such extracts for the Library of the Royal Society of Tasmania. Further, he wrote a paper on the subject which was published in the Papers and Proceedings of the Royal Society of Tasmania for 1925, and this paper should be read by all who desire to obtain an insight into the true historical perspective of the Port Arthur settlement.

Many items drawn attention to by Mr. Giblin are worthy of mention; but in the present instance there is but space to mention one or two.

Shortly before leaving England Captain Booth and others held an excursion to see the Manchester train. The novelty of this will be realised when it is recalled that the excursion took place but six years after the opening of the first public railroad in England. As Mr. Giblin remarks, "It is reasonable to suppose that the tramway between Long Bay and Norfolk Bay projected and begun by the Commandant in 1836 owed its origin to the experience gained in Lancashire." Traces of this old tramway can still be seen.

An outstanding feature of the journal is the inner light thrown upon the Commandant's feelings towards his charges. In spite of much that has been written and more that has been said, it is clear that Charles O'Hara Booth, as well as many other officials, who were associated with him, treated his charges in a just manner. It must always be remembered, however, that his personal inclinations as regards leniency or otherwise were always made subservient to "the system," that code of rules and regulations laid down by the Home authorities.

One more item, and we will pass on to more recent times. In describing Dr. Browning's visit to the settlement in 1836 the diary contains the following entry:—



IN THE MODEL PRISON.

"4th Oct.—Dr. B. visited Point Puer and catechised, etc. Addressed the prisoners again this afternoon. Got his pocket picked while at Settlement School this evening."

Such days are past, however, and as our party reached the township on a glorious autumn morning the beauty of the bay, with its setting of English trees and Tasmanian eucalypts, far outweighed the thoughts of the past. As a page of history the settlement of Port Arthur and the methods adopted are worthy of the deepest study, but as a means of satisfying a merely morbid curiosity as regards the dark cells and the other Early Victorian methods of prison discipline, such subjects are best left alone. Rather let one's mind dwell upon the natural beauty of the bay, with the reflections of the fringing trees mirrored in its placid surface and along the shore the signs of the present era as they displace those of the past. Time aided by fire, has done much to destroy the buildings of the old settlement. Many have been converted to other uses, whilst in place of the dull tread of the "human centipedes" the old cobblestones of Champ-street echo to the honk of motor cars. Below the tall walls of the old penitentiary tennis parties are engaged in friendly rivalry, whilst out in the reclaimed area near the old slipyards the cricket ground calls its adherents.

As one looks at the scene which this picturesque bay presents on this present Easter morn one recalls those lines of Browning,

"The past is in its grave,
Though its ghost still haunts us."

The days of the old regime are over, although the mysterious influence of the old settlement grips one whilst within its precincts.

Back in camp within the merry glow of the camp fire and the wireless loud speaker giving forth items from Melbourne, Sydney, or Adelaide at the operator's will, one's thoughts cannot but dwell upon the changes that have occurred within the century. A hundred years ago the settlement of Port Arthur was not even commenced. To-day its foundation and influence is a matter of history. O'Hara Booth's rather wonderful series of signal stations have lapsed into decay, and just as the wonder of wireless has displaced the complicated semaphore signals of old Port Arthur, so an enlightened tea-

nor of public opinion has awakened in regard to man's humanity to man.

The following day again proved the glory of our autumn weather. The dewy morn gave place to radiant sunshine. Some members set out to visit Mount Arthur, whilst a smaller party again visited the township, others went westward along the shores and cliffs, whilst a further section visited Half-Moon Bay. Those who stayed in the vicinity of the camp spent their time in fishing and to such good purpose that there was a plentiful supply of fish for breakfast next morning.

In the vicinity of the Remarkable Cave there were sights that held the interest of the onlookers for hours. Apart from the glorious weather and the grandeur of the rocky coastal scenery there was a heavy ground swell breaking along the shore, and as the waves broke against the cliffs and outlying rocks they formed an ever-changing scene of true magnificence.

Advancing in serried ranks of blue they combed over on reaching the shore, their tips merged into various green hues, and then broke in a smother of white foam. As the undertow commenced, and the foam and spin-drift began to fall away from the rocks, there appeared a whole series of most picturesque waterfalls. Such an ever-changing scene in the romantic setting in which it was enacted could not fail to grip the imagination, and those who were privileged to witness it from the slopes of the hills far above were loud in their praises.

A short distance to the east was the Blowhole—a narrow slit in the rocky ground—out of which every now and again there burst a cloud of spin-drift so fine as to be mistaken for smoke at a short distance away. This was caused by the waves many feet below roaring through the subterranean tunnel, and flushing their shoreward career in a swirl of waters and foam in the confined space of the honeycombed chambers of the rocky caves of the Blowhole, the limited spaces of which are in marked contrast to the Remarkable Cave. This latter wonder of nature is but an immense blowhole, in which both the bowl-shaped opening and the twin tunnels have been worn out by the sea to a very considerable degree. So extensive has been the erosion that at low tide and when the sand has been swept inshore it is possible to walk right through to the outer beach. On one of our previous visits the mem-



PORT ARTHUR AS IT IS TO-DAY.



A PRETTY SPOT NEAR THE REMARKABLE CAVE.

bers played a game of beach cricket at the outer entrance to the cave, but such would not have been possible on the present occasion.

Still further to the east, beyond the Blowhole, the rounded outline of Brown Mountain reaches south towards the sea, and terminates in a bluff headland of diabase cliffs which descend hundreds of feet sheer to the sea. Wandering across the moorlike country which is so characteristic of the coastal strip around Safety Cove the liquid notes of the yellow-winged honeyeaters call incessantly from the numerous patches of scrub. Occasionally certain of the ground feeding birds are aroused, and as they rise with a whirr from almost at the feet of some of the party there is another interest added to the moorland trail, above which a sea eagle planes across on his way to search the shores of the cove for such edible morsels as the waves have cast upon the sands.

At the summit of Brown Mountain the cairn, like many of the other cairns on our mountain tops, is being allowed to fall to pieces. From here a fine vista of the shore line and harbour unfolds itself; the picturesque setting of Port Arthur is seen to good advantage. For a closer view of the settlement itself there is perhaps no better viewpoint than that on Scorpion Rock, the hill just above the church; whilst for an even more extended panorama of the peninsula settlements a visit can be paid to the summit of Mount Arthur, which is not far from the township. On the summit can be seen the foundations of one of the old semaphore stations. Several parties from the camp paid visits to this and other vantage points. On Easter Monday practically all the members visited Half-Moon Bay, a silvery arc of sand facing the ocean and bounded on the west by the great rounded dome of Brown Mountain and on the east by the long point which separates this outer bay from the inner and quieter waters of Safety Cove. The long ocean rollers end their northward journey here, and the massive sand dunes which fringe the shore testify to the forces which are at work on this section of the coast.

These dunes, with their steeply-inclined faces on the seaward side, ever prove a fascination, and within a few minutes of the arrival of the parties at the bay there was great activity as regards sand sports. The various slides and other exercises carried out on the slopes recalled visions of the

winter sports of our Tasmanian Highlands, where snow takes the place of sand. Tasmania has much to offer in the field of winter sport, but up to the present little has been done to develop it. The National Park Board has done and is still doing all that it can with its limited resources in order to open up a winter tourist trail to our highlands, but more needs to be done by the larger departments of the state.

Much of the initial credit as regards the commencement of winter sport in Tasmania is due to Mr. E. T. Emmett, formerly Director of the Tasmanian Government Tourist Bureau. It is a matter of great regret that Mr. Emmett no longer personally controls our tourist traffic, and the policy of transferring his enthusiasm and expert knowledge of the tourist attractions of our island state to another sphere is open to criticism, as in more ways than one it has meant a loss to the state.

The sand slides of Half Moon Bay provide just as invigorating exercise as the snow slopes of Mount Field, and after an hour or more of these, the members assembled for lunch with both appetites and wits sharpened, for it would have been difficult to imagine a merrier party than that which assembled for lunch under the shade of the casuarinas which fringe the shore.

After lunch visits were paid to several places of interest in the near vicinity, and the various groups all returned to camp in ample time for the evening meal, which Chef Parker and his assistants had prepared in their usual efficient manner. At the gathering an opportunity was taken of thanking Messrs. Briggs Bros. for their kindness to the campers during our stay at Safety Cove, and, in addition, other remarks were made, all of which went to show that the twenty-second Easter Camp had been enjoyed by all. The perfect weather experienced, in addition to other considerations, greatly assisted in this direction. Except for a slight misty shower of about an hour's duration on Monday evening the weather was perfect during the whole currency of the camp.

Owing to the excellent manner in which the wireless worked, the usual camp-fire concerts gave place to concerts and lectures broadcast from Melbourne. One evening we had the pleasure of hearing Dr. J. A. Leach lectur-

ing concerning bird life. Our thanks are due to Mr. Philip Melhurst for the trouble when he took in bringing his wireless set to camp, and in working it in such an excellent manner.

Tuesday morning was spent in breaking up camp. Some of the members set out to Wedge Bay (Nubeena), there to await the arrival of the steamer, and so avoid the journey round Cape Raoul. Others, who had brought their cars down, returned to the city by road. The remainder completed the dismantling of the camp, and then amused themselves in various ways whilst awaiting the arrival of the Reemere. It was nearly 2 o'clock before the steamer's whistle warned members to prepare for the last phase of our Easter outing. The boats soon made an impression upon the pile of baggage on the beach, and by 3 o'clock the last boatload had left the shore, the anchor was weighed, and the return journey commenced. An exceptionally smooth sea prevailed outside the Heads, and the photographers of the party had a busy time as

we passed close to Cape Raoul and other prominent and picturesque headlands which serve to make the Southern Tasmanian coast famous for its scenery.

Calling in at Wedge Bay, those members who had journeyed across to Nubeena were taken aboard, and it was not long before we were heading across Storm Bay to where the Derwent Light twinkled and glittered, beyond which the glare from the city's lights could be seen many miles away.

Once in the river, these ever grew nearer, and by 9 o'clock we were alongside the Hobart wharves.

Thus came to an end another Easter outing, and one which will always be remembered, owing not only to the delightful weather which was experienced, but to other circumstances as well, one of which was the willing manner in which one and all worked for the success of the trip, and the excellent comradeship which was ever present from start to finish of the outing.



THE WIRELESS TENT AT THE EASTER CAMP.

BOTANICAL NOTES

By L. RODWAY, C.M.G.

The entire district of Port Arthur, with its beautiful inlets and perfect coves, is an ideal collecting ground for the botanist. Our time is short and the ways long, so we must be satisfied with what we may find about the camp at Safety Cove. Firstly, the ecology of the vegetation, that is, how do the plants respond to their surroundings. The conditions on the whole are simple. A great part is wet heath and sour peat, due to considerable rainfall, and poor drainage. I.e. uminous shrubs, epacrids and sedge, plants which can still live in water contain ing a considerable amount of humic acid, were prominent, while wherever channels over rocks permitted pure water to pass there surely odd eucalypts established themselves.

Eucalypts were mainly peppermints and white gums, but towards the entrance to the port a most interesting form, sometimes called blue peppermint also cabbage gum, occurs. It is closely related to Risdon gum, but not quite the same, and was once named *Eucalyptus hypericifolia*, by Robert Brown. The Risdon gum and its variations require a lot of attention before we shall fully understand it. It is a great pity that we have very few popular names for our wild plants, and those we have are responsible for much confusion. The same name is often ap-

plied to several distinct plants. For instance, dogwood, currant, pear, or, on the other hand, several names apply to the same plant. In Victoria a complete list of popular names for native plants has been constructed. If this list is consistently used in our schools it will take little more than a generation to get the scheme in full working order. Would it not be wise of us to adopt the Victorian list, and add our special forms to it?

The tongue of land that stretches out from the western side of the entrance of the port, bears two very interesting forms of heath. *Epacris heteroneura*, which occurs only towards the wet west, and crops up again in Victoria, New South Wales, and New Zealand, and *Epacris myrtifolia*, a rare Tasmanian heath, originally described and figured by Labillardiere.

The pretty pink boronia, *B. pinnata*, was fairly common. It is interesting that when the plant grows at a considerable altitude, say 7000 feet or upwards, it develops in its leaves a quantity of oil of citronel. This occurs but slightly when growing on low lands. Amongst the acacias the only unusual one was *Acacia suaveolens*, which was just opening its flowers. This wattle can always be recognised by its angular stem and its late flowering period.



A GROUP AT CARNARVON.

GEOLOGICAL NOTES

By A. N. LEWIS, M.C., LL.M.

Although Safety Cove, Port Arthur, does not provide many features of interest, several formations can be studied here better than in most places, notably the contact of the dolerite (diabase) with the sandstone near Remarkable Cave.

Permo-carboniferous mudstones occur at Point Puer and make up the well-known "Suicide Cliffs." They contain a few typical fossils, and are evidently members of the Upper Marine Series. From several miles north of Port Arthur to the coast the rocks consist of Ross sandstones, with occasional traces of fossil plants, and they merge into the Tasman Peninsular coal measures between Port Arthur and Taranna.

Dolerite outcrops on the ridges east and west of Port Arthur and extends to the south in the form of massive sills. These sills—Cape Raoul and Tasman Island form typical examples—are obviously lateral extensions of the main mass further north. On the edge of the sills the mechanism of the intrusion can be studied with great ease, and particularly in the vicinity of the Remarkable Cave many fine vertical and horizontal sections are to be seen. The dolerite, welling upward in the form probably of a massive dyke somewhere in the vicinity of Mount Arthur, has extended laterally through the sandstones by stopping and absorbing blocks of the older rock. In this vicinity you can see every stage from thin faces of dolerite beginning to merge their way through cracks or weak lines of strata and through more massive examples of the same features to the stage where several of these faces and small sills join, and gradually absorb large blocks of sandstone isolated in this way, and right at the Remarkable Cave some small masses of sandstone—inclusions

in a very considerable body of dolerite—can be seen. Nowhere is it clearer that the dolerite intruded without any violence.

Coast features have been largely produced by erosion of the softer sandstones from these dolerite sills, leaving southward extensions in the form of capes, such as Cape Raoul. On Tasman Island there is a tiny patch of sandstone, a small remnant of the rock that once clothed the whole south coast of the peninsula and usually small patches are to be seen here and there. The main coast line has been mainly produced by late Tertiary block faulting, and the trend of these faults can be followed by observing the series of straight lines which make up the coast of this part of Tasmania. The shallow water that extends for some 15 miles south of Tasman's Peninsula evidently covers a further portion of what was once part of the peninsula, and has been submerged by this faulting. The presence of the Point Puer limestones is another proof of faulting processes.

Sand dunes and the way they are formed can be studied to great advantage here. It is particularly noticeable that where the beach is subject to the fullest force of the wind high dunes do not accumulate, their tops being blown off and distributed across the back country. But where, as in Half-Moon Bay, the beach is somewhat sheltered from the full blast of the wind, they accumulate to a great height. On the other hand, in still more sheltered localities, such as Safety Cove, there is not sufficient power in the wind to produce sand dunes of any height. The country between Remarkable Cave and Safety Cove is covered with wind-blown sand, the product of the erosion of the South Coast.



SOME OF THE PARTY AT PORT ARTHUR.